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# Nazi 'army' tale disturbing, but coverup report is worse

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THE EVIDENCE that U.S. intelligence officials recruited and harbored Nazi war criminals might be dismissed as just another lunatic stunt by the crowd that was later to bring us the Bay of Pigs. Except for one detail. Three decades later, it appears, high-level people in Washington were still trying to hide the details from government probers.

That's the finding of John Loftus, a former Justice Department war-crimes investigator. His sleuthing has prompted both that agency and the Government Accounting Office to look again for possible links between the government and suspected war criminals.

## *Hundreds reportedly involved*

Four years ago, the GAO investigated what were then growing suspicions that a large number of Nazis or Nazi collaborators had entered the U.S. after World War II with the complicity of American officials. But the GAO, after an investigation delayed considerably by problems in obtaining records, concluded that while nine suspected war criminals had been employed by several government agencies, including the CIA, there had been no widespread conspiracy.

Mr. Loftus, however, has produced evidence indicating that the one-time Office of Policy Coordination, later melded into the CIA, secretly and illegally imported hundreds of Nazis or Nazi collaborators from a Russian province bordering Poland to form an anti-Soviet spy army. This "army" for some reason never received its marching orders; most of the Nazis evidently were given new identities and help in starting new lives in this country.

Conceivably, a case could be made for this repugnant scheme, since the Nazis in the late 1940s were a defeated foe and we were then facing another enemy, the Soviet Union, in a perilous

Cold War. But no case, if it's true, can be made for a coverup that reportedly has endured until now. Mr. Loftus claims the GAO missed its mark the first time around because other government officials — possibly the Defense Department — removed crucial information from old military files.

According to the evidence Mr. Loftus has compiled and turned over to the latest investigators, the aims of U.S. intelligence activities were at times in direct conflict. "It was comical," Mr. Loftus told *The New York Times*. "There's a document by an Army intelligence officer saying, 'Here's one arm of the CIA hunting Nazis, and another recruiting them.'"

Comical? Maybe so, if such exploits are behind us. But other revelations in recent years about the intelligence community's misadventures in areas such as Watergate, drug experimentation and botched assassination attempts of foreign leaders give the latest evidence a measure of credibility.

## *Who are they protecting?*

The same goes for Mr. Loftus's credibility, which is strengthened by the Justice Department decision to probe his possible misuse of classified documents. Those documents, says Mr. Loftus believably, were simply those the GAO was thwarted from examining several years ago.

Ex-Nazis living new lives under new names in the United States periodically surface as they are extradited for war-crimes trials in Europe. It's disturbing to hear that the entry of many of them into this country may have been made possible by our own government, in an overzealous, short-sighted scheme. But more disturbing is the news that some government officials charged with protecting U.S. citizens may be far more concerned now with protecting themselves.